



PIMA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PIMA COUNTY RECORDS FIRST DEATH FROM WEST NILE VIRUS

Tucson, AZ – September 12, 2006 – The Pima County Health Department has received notification of the death of an elderly woman from West Nile virus. Her death is the first statewide this season. Previously, there had been only 5 cases of West Nile virus reported in Pima County. Of those, all are recovering from their illness.

In 2004 one death and another in 2005 occurred, both in elderly men. Generally speaking, West Nile infection causes more serious disease in older persons.

West Nile virus is transmitted to humans by mosquito bites. “We cannot stress enough the importance of eliminating mosquito breeding sites from around our homes,” said Dr. Michelle McDonald, Chief Medical Officer for the Pima County Health Department. “This combined with the use of repellants containing DEET, picaridan or lemon oil of eucalyptus, and wearing protective clothing when outside between dusk and dawn will help reduce the possibility of getting mosquito bites.”

It is also important to note that West Nile virus cannot be passed from person to person. Although in most instances the infection produces only mild symptoms, the disease can result in long term significant illness and, as in this instance, death. Those with questions regarding the virus in humans can call 740-8315.

The public is encouraged to report water that has been standing for more than 3 days to the Health Department at 740-3191. An inspector will be sent to the area to determine the need for abatement. Reports of stagnant pools or dead birds (not doves, pigeons or baby birds) can also be made to that number.

To date, only one of the mosquito monitoring pool sites throughout Pima County has tested positive for West Nile virus; however, it appears we are now approaching the peak of the mosquito season and should not be lulled into thinking the worst is over. Mosquito monitoring will continue through the end of October when mosquito season usually ends.

For more information log onto www.pimahealth.org

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